

SWEDEN'S GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICE

Introduction

Sweden's Good Environmental Choice program was founded in 1990 by the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature (SSNC), Sweden's largest environmental organization. The environmental certification program is private, positive, and voluntary, and has evolved into a product and shelf labeling program from what was originally a guide to environmentally sound shopping published by the Society in 1988. In 1989, the Swedish Cooperative Federation (KF), one of Sweden's largest retailers, initiated a shelf labeling program that encouraged the purchase of goods recommended by the Society's guide. By the end of 1989, the two other largest Swedish retailers, ICA and Dagab, joined with KF in sponsoring an ecolabeling scheme that became the Good Environmental Choice Program.

Good Environmental Choice has criteria for 17 product categories and has approved 1,139 products to date.

Program Summary

The Society for the Conservation of Nature administers the Good Environmental Choice program, although some of the program functions are performed by the Board of the program. The Board is composed of three representatives from the Society for the Conservation of Nature (one of whom is the chairman with a casting vote), as well as three trade representatives (one from each of the sponsoring retailers).

The Board is responsible for selecting the product categories.

The Society for the Conservation of Nature develops criteria for each product category. Criteria are based on single attributes. The Society does not attempt to perform a life cycle analysis (LCA) to determine product criteria because it believes that unequivocal judgments, upon which LCA is based, are not possible, even given "unlimited time and resources." For this reason, the program has decided to concentrate its efforts on "things that can be changed now." The criteria are written and approved independently of the Board, although in this process the Society may consult universities, public authorities, and occasionally private businesses.

To have a product approved by the Good Environmental Choice program, manufacturers must declare the ingredients of their products to the Society. In certain cases, more information is required, such as the emissions of a product during production. Instructions of the required information are available from the Society. Approved products are included in the register of Good Environmental Choice products that is published by the Society, and are also identified by program shelf labels in supermarkets of the three retailer sponsors. Because costs are borne by the Society and the participating retailers, manufacturers are not required to pay a fee to have their products listed in the register or displayed on the Good Environmental Choice shelves. A

manufacturer may also choose to print the Good Environmental Choice falcon logo on their product, in which case they must apply for a licence from the Society and pay a fee of SEK 5000 (US\$664) for the first product, and SEK 1500 (US\$200) for any additional products.

Program Methodology

The Good Environmental Choice program selects product categories and qualifying criteria. After analyzing a resource impact matrix for a particular product category, the most important aspect (e.g., bleaching for paper products) is identified as the basis of the criteria. The program does not attempt to perform a life-cycle assessment (LCA).

Other Information

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation began working in 1992 with the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), the National Board for Industrial and Technical Development in Sweden, and SEMKO (a tester and certifier of electrical products), to develop environmental labels for personal computers. The goal of the labeling program is to influence technical developments in the field of information technology, as well as make it easier for companies to choose good equipment from the environmental standpoint. The first stage of the program development created TCO'92, a label for computer monitors. The more recent program, TCO'95, provides a label for complete personal computers (monitors, system unit, and keyboards). The label for used for TCO'95 shows the falcon emblem from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

References

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